

VOC FOR IOP/FH

BACKGROUNDER 1-0739
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MAY 7, 1976

USSR, EAST EUROPE AND HELSINKI

ANNCR:

THE UNITED STATES SENATE HAS VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO ESTABLISH A COMMISSION TO MONITOR COMPLIANCE WITH AND VIOLATIONS OF LAST YEAR'S HELSINKI AGREEMENTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE DEALING WITH HUMANITARIAN ISSUES. VOA'S DOLPH HAERING TAKES A LOOK AT WHAT THE SOVIET UNION AND EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAVE DONE TO IMPLEMENT THE PROVISIONS OF HELSINKI.

VOICE:

EVER SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE HELSINKI FINAL DOCUMENT NINE MONTHS AGO, THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS EAST EUROPEAN ALLIES HAVE PROMOTED THE FIRST TWO PARTS OF THE HELSINKI DOCUMENT, INCLUDING THE INVIOABILITY OF POST-WAR EUROPEAN BORDERS AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION. BUT CONCERNING THE THIRD PART -- THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS, MOSCOW HAS EMPHASIZED THAT THESE ARE RESTRICTED BY THE LAWS OF EACH COUNTRY.

THERE HAVE BEEN MOVES IN EASTERN EUROPE TO COMPLY WITH THE HELSINKI PRINCIPLES. THERE HAS BEEN A SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT OF WORKING CONDITIONS FOR PERMANENTLY ACCREDITED JOURNALISTS IN THE SOVIET UNION AND IN EAST GERMANY. THE SOVIET UNION IS RELAXING PROCEDURAL RULES CONCERNING EXIT VISAS. THERE HAVE BEEN MINOR STEPS TOWARD FACILITATING THE REUNIFICATION OF FAMILIES.

CHARGES BY WESTERN POLITICAL LEADERS AND ANALYSTS THAT THE HUMANITARIAN IMPROVEMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE ARE MINIMAL, HAVE BEEN ANSWERED BY EAST EUROPEAN LEADERS AND MEDIA WITH

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE WEST THAT THE CHARGES THEMSELVES VIOLATE THE HELSINKI PROVISIONS.

MOSCOW HAS CHARGED WASHINGTON WITH INTERFERENCE IN THE DOMESTIC AFFAIRS OF OTHER COUNTRIES BY VOICING CONCERN ABOUT COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN WEST EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS. IN A RECENT PRAVDA ARTICLE, MOSCOW CLAIMS THAT EAST EUROPE IS OUTSTRIPPING THE WEST IN FULFILLING THE HELSINKI PROVISIONS ON HUMANITARIAN ISSUES. IT LISTED AS WHAT IT CALLED "CONVINCING EVIDENCE" THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS FAR AHEAD OF THE WEST IN EXCHANGES OF FILMS, THEATER GROUPS AND BOOKS, BUT MADE NO MENTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH HAS BEEN THE MAIN CRITICISM OF MOSCOW FROM THE WEST.

THIS WESTERN CRITICISM OF SOVIET NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE HELSINKI ACCORD IS BASED ON A LONG LIST OF EXAMPLES: THE SOVIET REFUSAL TO LET DOCTOR SAKHAROV TRAVEL TO OSLO TO RECEIVE HIS NOBEL PEACE PRIZE; THE GENERAL TREATMENT OF POLITICAL DISSIDENTS, CRITICIZED EVEN BY WESTERN COMMUNISTS; THE CONTINUED PRACTICE OF DENYING VISAS TO WESTERN JOURNALISTS FOR POLITICAL REASONS.

MOSCOW AND EAST EUROPE ARE STEPPING UP THEIR IDEOLOGICAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE WEST, WITH SPECIFIC ATTACKS AGAINST WESTERN RADIO STATIONS BROADCASTING TO EAST EUROPE. NINE MONTHS AFTER THE HELSINKI SUMMIT MEETING, ONLY A TOKEN NUMBER OF WESTERN NEWSPAPERS IS AVAILABLE IN MOSCOW AND THESE ONLY IN TOURIST HOTELS. IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, EVEN THE BRITISH COMMUNIST PAPER MORNING STAR, WHICH WAS CRITICAL OF THE SOVIET-LED INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1968, HAD FIFTY PERCENT OF ITS EDITIONS CONFISCATED EARLY THIS YEAR BY PRAGUE AUTHORITIES.

EVEN WITHIN EASTERN EUROPE, THERE HAVE BEEN PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION. THE YUGOSLOVAVIAN NEWSPAPER POLITIKA HAS CLOSED ITS BUREAU IN PRAGUE AFTER ITS CORRESPONDENT THERE WAS PREVENTED FROM CARRYING OUT HIS PROFESSIONAL WORK.

THUS, NINE MONTHS AFTER THE HELSINKI CONFERENCE, WESTERN CRITICS SAY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS PRINCIPLES IN EAST EUROPE LEAVES MUCH TO BE DESIRED. EASTERN EUROPE RESPONDS WITH COUNTER-CHARGES, THUS CONTINUING THE EAST-WEST CONTROVERSY EVEN WHILE PLANS ARE BEING MADE FOR A FOLLOW-UP CONFERENCE IN BELGRADE NEXT YEAR TO REVIEW THE ALL COUNTRIES' COMPLIANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE HELSINKI ACCORD.

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